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New York

President: Mr. Udovenko ..... (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

Address by His Serene Highness Crown Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco

The President: The Assembly will first hear an address by His Serene Highness Crown Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the principality of Monaco.

His Serene Highness Crown Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco, His Serene Highness Crown Prince Albert, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Crown Prince Albert *(interpretation from French):* It is a great pleasure for me to congratulate you, Sir, on your outstanding election. Your competence and your vast experience in multilateral diplomacy, to which you have devoted a large part of your professional life, together with your personal qualities assure us that our work will be conducted properly and be successful.

I should also like to take this opportunity to pay a well-earned tribute to Ambassador Razali of Malaysia for the effective way in which he conducted the fifty-first session of our General Assembly.

I congratulate, also, the members of the Bureau, who I am convinced stand ready to do their utmost to ensure the success of this important session.

It is in fact an important session because, upon the invitation of the Secretary-General, it is being devoted largely to an exchange of views, which I hope will be productive, on the reform of the Organization.

The document before us, entitled "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform", is of the greatest interest to my country's authorities. The desire to make the Organization, and above all its Secretariat, more efficient by improving the coherence and coordination of its activities is the very judicious inspiration for the proposed reform process. That desire is easy to understand and endorse, given its obvious responsiveness to current real needs.

During the 52 years of its existence, the United Nations has regularly been challenged by the requirements of an ever changing world and has thus been led to develop or create new structures — without, however, always reducing or suppressing old ones.

The current exceptionally broad changes in the political, economic and social spheres irresistibly call for

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a profound transformation of multilateral cooperation. They require the Organization to make an ineluctable effort to adapt that cannot be delayed without jeopardizing its prestige and seeing its international role inexorably wither. Thus, we can only endorse the will demonstrated by the General Assembly at the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and the recent initiatives undertaken. In our view, it is rational to concentrate and better coordinate the Organization's missions around the five great pillars of its Charter responsibilities: international peace and security, development, humanitarian affairs, economic and social affairs and human rights.

The promotion and protection of human rights, which the Secretary-General very rightly proposes to strengthen, receive the intersectoral treatment which their multidisciplinary nature naturally evokes. That nature must not allow us to forget, however, that this fundamental area of the Organization's competence requires the strengthening of its appropriate structures. The High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mrs. Mary Robinson, who has just assumed her office — and whose arrival we welcome sincerely and confidently — must be given sufficient human and financial resources, as well as the decision-making autonomy, necessary to fulfil the essential duties that have fallen to her.

Next year's celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should be an opportunity to recall the commitments undertaken by the Member States when they adopted that text on 10 December, 1948, and, a few years later, on 16 December 1966, the two international human rights agreements which, I am pleased to say, the Principality has recently ratified.

The Emergency Relief Coordinator entrusted with humanitarian assistance must also enjoy the greatest autonomy and the means necessary to allow him to intervene effectively and promptly when necessary — a task that the Government of the Principality accords the highest priority.

This autonomy must, more generally, touch the entire international civil services. The independence of United Nations agents — the Secretary-General first among them — is the guarantee of the quality of their service and of the trust which the international community places in them.

The decision to bring together all the field programmes and information centres in common premises, to be known as United Nations Houses, is both rational and symbolic. It is an ideal response to the current needs to concentrate and better coordinate operational activities, while promoting a strong and cohesive image of the entire system. We strongly encourage the Secretary-General to pursue this approach, which has recently been undertaken in South Africa.

For those States that will not have the opportunity to host such Houses, might we not consider establishing a United Nations presence in the form of a volunteer honourary representative: a national figure mandated, alongside the authorities, to disseminate information and heighten general awareness? The widespread practice of appointing honourary consuls could, in this respect, serve as an example.

The special team dedicated to reorienting information activities highlights, in the Secretary-General's report, a need which we understand: to improve and enlarge the United Nations capacity to communicate at the country level through innovative local partnerships. The establishment of honourary United Nations representatives would be one way to follow up that suggestion on a practical and affordable level.

As the Secretary-General points out, public interest in the United Nations could also be sharpened by the organization of high-level thematic debates within General Assembly bodies. We agree with this, given that such debates would receive more attention from the press and public opinion than those currently held and would lessen the need for large world conferences.

The Security Council has already taken steps to improve information services and exchanges with Member States that are not members of the Council and with the international community at large. These steps are useful and welcome and are beginning to bear fruit.

The important question of enlarging the membership of that principal organ, which depends on a decision from the Member States, is also of great interest to us. The High-level Working Group on that subject has worked tremendously hard under the leadership of successive Presidents of the General Assembly and the dedication of its Vice-Presidents. We convey to them our warmest thanks. The Principality of Monaco is ready to endorse unreservedly any commitment or solution that might be achieved, including the creation of long-term seats lasting six to 10 years, for example.

In tandem with the improvement already begun in the functioning of the Economic and Social Council, some considered attention also appears to be necessary to the Trusteeship Council. The suggestions made by the Secretary-General seem to us to be wise and far-sighted.

The Principality of Monaco could support the idea of entrusting that organ with new trusteeship responsibilities in the spheres of the environment and the protection of the common human patrimony. Outer space, the atmosphere, the high seas, as well as the free zones of the Arctic and Antarctic — especially in the spirit of the 1959 Treaty — would all stand to gain, under certain conditions, by being placed within its competence. The Council might also be entrusted with the ongoing task of considering the great transformations that would be entailed by predictable advances in science and technology.

We must hope that the proposed reforms will be speedily enacted, so that the Millennium Assembly proposed by the Secretary-General for the year 2000 will indeed be an occasion for celebrating an updated and modernized United Nations.

The Principality, which this year is celebrating the 700th anniversary of my family's dynasty in Monaco, can only wish long life to a United Nations strengthened and more open to civil society.

Turning now to the nearer future, allow me to emphasize the importance that my country attaches to concluding the work on the international criminal court, which should lead to a plenipotentiary diplomatic conference next year in Rome. A collective morality that is universal in scope cannot exist without institutions to disseminate it, implement it and ensure its respect.

The adoption of a Convention on anti-personnel landmines, which continue to inflict their savagery on civilian populations, has long been one of our goals. Is not respect for the dignity and physical integrity of human beings one of the most essential and universally recognized values, one that underlies both human rights and humanitarian law?

The meeting convened by Canada last October and the series of meetings held in Vienna, Bonn and Brussels this year, as well as the diplomatic conference that recently took place in Oslo have led to the drafting of a text, which, in the spirit of resolution 51/45 S, prohibits not only the use but also the development, stockpiling and transfer of such mines. We truly welcome this development.

In the same vein, I should like to note that the Principality has recently submitted its instruments of accession to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, a Convention that we believe constitutes great progress in the rules of warfare.

Next year will be the International Year of the Ocean, for which we are making active preparations. The marine environment laboratory of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Monaco has recently moved into new, spacious and functional offices made available to it by our Government. That laboratory, thanks to its modern equipment, is helping to identify sources and new chemical markers of marine pollution. It regularly organizes training courses and consultative missions, and it is actively contributing, with the assistance of the United Nations Environment Programme and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, to the MEDPOL programme to combat pollution in the Mediterranean — an issue of great interest to us.

The International Year of the Ocean should provide an opportunity to strengthen such programmes as well as international cooperation to promote the preservation and management of marine resources, including certain fish stocks and marine mammals. At the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly on the environment last June, many delegations emphasized these issues. Echoing the Commission on Sustainable Development, some quite rightly recalled the need regularly to assess, on an intergovernmental level and in the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the quality of the marine environment. This has been done for almost 20 years in France, Italy and Monaco under the RAMOGE programme. We hope that other regional cooperation activities of this nature will develop in 1998.

For coastal States as well as for the international community, the oceans and the seas must be a protected, shared space, sparingly exploited — not a place for intense economic confrontation.

Finally, like the European Union, whose views on many issues we share, the Principality of Monaco remains very concerned by the continued financial crisis in the United Nations. This crisis can be resolved only if Member States comply strictly with their commitments and pay in full, on time and without conditions their contributions to the regular and peacekeeping budgets as well as all accumulated arrears.

As a member of the International Olympic Committee, I am pleased once again to remind the Assembly that the Winter Olympic Games will be held next February in Nagano, Japan. The General Assembly at its fifty-first session invited Member States, through resolution 50/13, to respect a truce before, during and after both the Summer and Winter Olympic Games. Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal must remain our motto at that great international meeting of the youth of the world.

Finally, I should like to convey my deep sorrow, shared by my father and by the people of Monaco, at the loss of lives resulting from the forest fires — an ecological cataclysm — that are raging in Sumatra, Indonesia, and from the air disaster that occurred in Maden this morning, as well as at the tragic results of last night's earthquake in the Italian peninsula. I should like to extend, on my own behalf and on behalf of my father and the people of Monaco, our deepest condolences and sympathy.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco for the statement he has just made.

His Serene Highness, Crown Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece, His Excellency Mr. Theodoros Pangalos.

Mr. Pangalos (Greece): Before I begin my speech, may I associate myself with the final appeal made by Prince Albert of Monaco, who preceded me at this rostrum. Perhaps this Organization can be instrumental in achieving an Olympic truce for the Olympic Games of 2000 and for those of 2004, which we will host in Athens. I think that this is an initiative that the Organization should take seriously.

Allow me to warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your election. Your qualities and skills augur well for the progress of this session. Moreover, I am especially pleased to salute in your person a representative of the Ukraine, a country with which Greece maintains long-standing friendly relations. I wish also to pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, for the effective manner in which he performed his functions.

The Greek Government is impressed with the way the new Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has been discharging his duties. His great experience warrants the hope that his ongoing endeavours aiming at the reform of this Organization will be crowned with success.

Mr. Abu-Nimah (Jordan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

On this occasion, I would like to express my appreciation to the United Nations membership at large for electing Greece to one of the positions of Vice-President of the General Assembly.

Earlier this week, the Foreign Minister of Luxembourg, in his capacity as President of the Council of the European Union, delivered a statement to which my Government fully subscribes; we subscribe as well as to the Union's memorandum, which has been submitted to the Assembly. I would like, however, to elaborate further on some issues of particular interest to my country.

As the millennium draws to a close, Greece, located at a crossroads of countries and civilizations, is striving to free the twenty-first century from the scourges of the past, thus offering to our region prospects of progress and prosperity. We are the only member of both the European Union and of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in our region, and we thus we function as the latter's link to Europe, guided by our firm belief that conflicts and prejudices have to be overcome through respect for international law and the principles of the United Nations.

In this context, we believe that Greece is able to play an important role in the Security Council and are therefore seeking election to that body, to one of the two non-permanent seats allocated to the Group of Western European and Other States for the biennium 1999-2000. Deeply dedicated to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, we are ready to take our share of responsibility for international peace and security. Indeed, Greece has been actively participating in several peacekeeping operations as a troop-contributing country.

This year, we became a member of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. We have advocated the Committee's expansion as a positive step forward, and we support any effort aimed at improving the peacekeeping capabilities of the United Nations. Furthermore, Greece has confirmed its willingness to

participate in the stand-by arrangements system and has joined other Member States in the continued efforts to enable the Organization to react more quickly and more efficiently to future peacekeeping requirements. As I reaffirm our palpable commitment to peacekeeping, I wish also to express my country's deep appreciation for the courage and dedication shown by peacekeeping personnel in confronting challenges to peace and security.

Comprehensive reform and restructuring of the United Nations system, including the size and working methods of the Security Council, must be attained with a view to meeting the changing needs of the world community as it moves into the next millennium. The reform package presented by the Secretary-General in July is a response to this necessity and constitutes a welcome step towards modernizing and strengthening the United Nations. Greece will contribute in a constructive and positive way to the success of the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General through his proposals.

We live in a world characterized by globalization and the introduction of new technologies; hence, the United Nations is called upon to pursue a broader set of objectives focusing on democratic development, sustainable development and higher living standards for all citizens of the world. The political commitment of its Member States and their contribution of adequate resources constitute the two fundamental prerequisites for the success of the United Nations. In this context, we welcome the determination of all Member States, in particular those that play a major role in the Organization's decision-making process, to fulfil their financial obligations on time and in full.

Greece, a State Member of the United Nations since 1945, will continue to honour its obligations to the United Nations, gradually increasing its annual contribution to the peacekeeping operations budget, moving from group C to group B on its own initiative.

The nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, on the overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21, held last June, gave us the opportunity five years after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Rio Conference, to renew and reinforce our commitment to sustainable development. Greece, with one third of the coastline of the entire Mediterranean basin and almost 3,000 islands, has a specific interest in promoting the management of coastal zones, sustainable tourism, sustainable water management and policies to combat desertification and deforestation.

We have been uninterruptedly implementing a long-term strategy for the protection of the environment while sharing with the international community the belief that Agenda 21 can be implemented only through a sense of common responsibility. However, the major environmental problems of our planet cannot be successfully tackled if socio-economic ills such as poverty are not combatted and eradicated.

Since the last session of the General Assembly, the prospect of a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem has, regrettably, remained elusive. For 23 years now Turkey has maintained more than 35,000 occupation troops on the island, blatantly defying international law. At the same time, the Turkish Cypriot population, for the protection of which the invasion was allegedly undertaken, has dwindled dramatically since 1974, due to political oppression coupled with the massive influx of settlers from mainland Turkey.

The Government of Greece aims at a reunited Cyprus, a common home to all of its inhabitants. We maintain that a settlement on the basis of the resolutions of the United Nations and the high- level agreements of 1977 and 1979 can bring peace and reconciliation to the island. Such a settlement should provide for a bizonal and bicommunal federation with a single sovereignty and international personality and with its independence and territorial integrity safeguarded through effective international guarantees. There is no doubt that a functional solution of the Cyprus problem would eliminate a source of instability in the region and contribute to the improvement of Turkish-Greek relations.

The main obstacle, however, remains Turkey's aim of legitimizing the status quo. Ankara's negative stance and lack of political will were once again displayed during the direct talks recently held under the auspices of the Secretary-General at Glion-sur-Montreux. As the President of the Security Council pointed out in an informed briefing to the press,

> "substantive progress at this time was impeded by the attempt to bring preconditions to the table by the other party, and here of course I mean the Turkish Cypriots."

On the other hand, the constructive stance of the Cypriot President, Mr. Clerides, at the talks was praised by the President of the Council in the same statement. His

proposal for the demilitarization of Cyprus must retain our thorough attention.

Greece unwaveringly supports the process of Cyprus's accession to the European Union, which will commence at the near future. We believe that its accession will benefit all the island's inhabitants. It could also act as a catalyst for the solution of the political problem. We sincerely hope that Turkey will eventually realize the benefits of the accession of Cyprus to the European Union, especially for the Turkish Cypriot population, and will change its present stance.

Our relations with Turkey have taken an additional downturn since 1996, when our neighbour added direct territorial claims to the existing policy of demands, threats of war and constant pressure, in an attempt to subvert the territorial status quo established more than 70 years ago by international law and treaties. Its attempt to back these claims by military means in January 1996 resulted in a crisis that just fell short of war.

Greece, while determined to protect, by all legitimate means, its sovereign rights stemming from international law, sincerely agrees that there is a need to establish normal good neighbourly relations, based on the principles of international law and respect for international treaties — something which Turkey seems determined to ignore.

It has been a consistent policy of our Government that Greek-Turkish relations should be addressed in a context of respect for international law and treaties. Greece has made it its policy to channel such relations through accepted rules of behaviour and the principles recognized in international life. The Madrid Joint Statement, signed by Turkey's President, Mr. Demirel, and the Greek Prime Minister, Mr. Simitis, provides a welcome initiative which might contribute to a gradual improvement.

The problems that really exist must be dealt with by legal means provided for by international law, and specifically through the International Court of Justice. Such a step would open possibilities for a gradual build-up of good-neighbourly relations and the establishment of confidence and cooperation in every field. In this sense, we are waiting for a move by the new Turkish Government to work in this direction — away from statements and acts which confuse the issue and relate to a past that we must transcend by means of those principles of international law that are enshrined in the United Nations Charter, and that our gathering here pledges to serve.

In the Balkan Peninsula, the area where Greece itself is located, the situation is gradually improving. My county has played an active role within the framework of various international activities designed to promote peace, stability, good neighbourliness and development in the area.

Greece values its historical relations with Albania. It is committed to continuing to work for the strengthening of cooperation between the two countries in all fields and to extending assistance for the rehabilitation of the country, in particular after the recent crisis. Our contribution to Operation Alba and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) presence has been essential and prompt.

The Greek minority in Albania will remain an important factor of friendship between the two peoples, actively contributing to the progress of their country.

Greece fully supports the process initiated with the Dayton Agreement. Maintaining excellent relations with all actors in the Yugoslav drama, we contribute substantially in keeping the peace. We have sent out massive humanitarian aid from governmental and non-governmental sources alike; we have deployed our soldiers with the Stabilization Force (SFOR); we have sent observers both on the European Community Monitor Mission and OSCE teams; and we are actively engaged in reconstruction work in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I am proud to report that we are among the few not only to put forward the money pledged at the 1996 Donors' Conference, but actually to have brought to completion the programmes we undertook to fulfil. Furthermore, we are increasing our contribution for 1997, by 35 per cent. All this, I must note, took place while we were massively engaged in stemming both the Albanian crisis and the deterioration of the financial situation in Bulgaria. Persistence in implementing the Dayton Agreement, encouraging democratization and opening up to the market economy and to the international community will provide guidance for all on ways to overcome present difficulties and will enable all actors to normalize their relations with each other, the United Nations and the international community in general.

Honouring the Interim Accord with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), we continue talks under the auspices of the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Vance, about the final name of that country. We hope that the Skopje

Government will realize the need for an early solution to this issue.

In the multilateral field, we have persistently promoted the process of cooperation and good neighbourliness in southeastern Europe, actively participating in such regional schemes as Royaumont, the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI), Balkan Cooperation, and Black Sea Economic Cooperation. The Declaration adopted in Thessaloniki on 10 June 1997 by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of countries of southeastern Europe has given a substantial impetus to this process.

In the same spirit, in early November Greece will host in Crete a summit of countries of southeastern Europe.

The situation in the Middle East continues to concern us. In fact, recent terrorist actions like those in Jerusalem, as well as the tragic situation in the West Bank and Gaza, constitute the tangible consequences of the stagnation of the peace process. Revival of both the peace process and the peace hope requires adherence to and full implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions and international agreements. The parties have to live up to their commitments. Real peace is a just and global one — in Israel as well as in Lebanon, where the need to implement Security Council resolution 425 (1978) continues to be painfully felt. Greece supports any efforts which could have positive results, and hence we encourage those undertaken by the European Union's Special Envoy in the Middle East. Moreover, our country is willing to offer any assistance aimed at the strengthening of peace and stability, security, and economic and social progress, as well as the establishment of confidence among all parties to the Middle East problem, in favour of the peoples of the area.

Greece is following with particular interest the recent developments in Africa, auspicious or ominous as they appear. Indeed, an increasing number of African countries are adopting pluralism as a form of Government and open-market principles for their economy. It Is Greece's belief that on the eve of the twenty-first century the international community must encourage and assist African countries to promote pluralism, respect for human rights and a free-market economy. Important developments will take place during this century in Africa.

Latin America, with which Greece has traditional ties of friendship, is consolidating the pace of development of recent years. Also, through successful regional integration, the countries of the region are assuming a stature on a worldwide scale that truly reflects the importance of the progress the region has achieved.

Last June's Bucharest Meeting between the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Council and the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) is a telling example. Greece, both bilaterally and as a member of the European Union, is looking forward to an increasing, comprehensive and substantial dialogue with the Latin American countries, to the benefit of international cooperation, trade liberalization, and stability.

The United Nations remains mankind's best hope for jointly solving the problems that collectively beset the world community. We therefore fully support the call for the reform of the United Nations. However, we strongly believe that any decision regarding the future form and function of our Organization should be taken by consensus and should reflect the needs and aspirations of all Member States — big and small, rich and poor alike — in whose hands and political will the destiny of the United Nations lies. Greece is prepared to shoulder its share of responsibility in this ongoing reform process.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The next speaker is His Excellency Mr. Mtara Maecha, Special Envoy of the President of the Republic and the Minister for Transport, Tourism, Posts and Telecommunications of Comoros, on whom I now call.

Mr. Maecha (Comoros) (*interpretation from French*): The unanimous election of the President of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly of the United Nations was a tribute not only to his outstanding diplomatic qualities, but also to his country, Ukraine — with which the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros fully intends to have good relations of friendship and cooperation. I would like to associate myself with the previous speakers in extending to him, on behalf of my delegation, our warm congratulations and to wish him all success in carrying out his noble task.

Allow me also to pay a well-deserved tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Razali Ismail, for the dedication and skill with which he guided the work and shouldered the task of President of the fifty-first session of our General Assembly.

I would also like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere congratulations to our new Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his outstanding election. I would like to express our deep gratitude to this illustrious

advocate of the ideals of peace, solidarity and justice for his unswerving dedication to the service of our institution. His experience in international affairs, together with his personal qualities, clearly guarantees that the United Nations will be given new impetus as it faces the new challenges confronting it.

At a time when we are meeting in the General Assembly to assess — as is our custom — the work carried out by our Organization in the areas of peacekeeping, the strengthening of international cooperation, the development of reforms required if the United Nations is to adapt to the needs of our time, we are obliged to note that the world continues to fall prey to numerous types of threats, tensions and ills of all sorts.

Thus, it is obvious that our Organization must play a very critical and primary role. However, in this period of globalization — of the obvious and irrevocable interdependence of nations, democracy, good governance and transparency in the management of public affairs — our Organization remains the target of those who wish to minimize and limit its role by preventing it from paying still greater attention to the problems of poor and disadvantaged countries. It goes without saying that this concept is not conducive to promoting the atmosphere of *detente* in international relations that has been awaited for so long.

Bearing in mind the noble tasks for which the Organization was founded, in particular the building of a just, peaceful and better integrated world society, it would be wise and reasonable for the major concerns of our Organization, since the end of the cold war, to be mobilization for disarmament and the search for solutions that can encourage the development policies of States, cooperation and international solidarity.

The trials and tribulations of history have once again placed my country, the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros, on the first page of international news. The tragic events of the last few months are the result of an unprecedented social and economic crisis which is battering my country. Indeed, counted among the least developed countries, over the last few years the Comoran State has witnessed a deterioration of the markets for its export products — vanilla, cloves, perfume oils, and so forth — due to strong international competition.

The poor sales of these products, which are the major sources of revenue for the State, and therefore for a majority of the inhabitants of the Comoros, have been compounded by the devaluation of our currency, without appropriate accompanying measures. This economic state of affairs has only served to exacerbate the already poor and vulnerable condition of a considerable sector of the population of the Comoros. Here I have in mind the galloping unemployment and the rising curve of poverty.

In this situation, which is of concern in many ways, the authorities of the Comoros, together with the Bretton Woods institutions, decided on a number of measures aimed at balancing State revenues and expenditures. These include a reduction in gross salaries; the privatization of State firms; a reduction of the operational State budget; and the launching of projects to generate revenue and permanent jobs.

These new guidelines were put forth on the eve of the free and democratic elections organized under the aegis of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the European Union and the United Nations. On 16 March 1996, these elections carried President Mohamed Taki Abdoulkarim to the highest post in my country.

Indeed, the catastrophic situation inherited by the newly elected President required the swiftest possible start of political, economic and social reforms capable of meeting the numerous challenges impeding the building of a democratic, prosperous and united society.

Among the efforts made along these lines by the new political authorities of the Comoros, we could mention the regular payment since 1997 of State officials' salaries.

However, despite this new impetus, the discontent spawned by a series of crises and tragedies in my country's recent history finally caught up with the harsh socio-economic facts of life of the Comorian people.

Expressed in different ways, in line with the susceptibilities on all sides, the rumblings of this discontent got out of bounds on the Comorian island of Anjouan. Indeed, since March 1997, various movements — both trade union and political — coalesced into an organization whose activism threatens the very heart of the Comorian State.

From the illegal occupation of public buildings to the trampling underfoot of the national flag, these factions sowing terror on the island of Anjouan used all kinds of methods to provoke the central power.

These outrageous actions, which have been unanimously condemned by the international community, were exacerbated by the proclamation of a pseudo-independence of the island of Anjouan.

Despite all these acts of provocation, the President of the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros, determined to preserve peace and national unity, opted for the path of dialogue and agreed action. Within this framework, the Government of the Comoros requested the mediation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) with a view to achieving a peaceful settlement of this domestic crisis.

As a result of the discussions initiated by the OAU mission, certain decisions, accepted by all sides, were taken designed to facilitate a return to normalcy — in particular, the withdrawal of military reinforcements, the provision to the island of vitally necessary foodstuffs, the organization of examinations at the end of the school year, and so on.

The response to this spirit of reconciliation by the separatists was the continuation of one act of escalation after another; they occupied the presidential residence at Hombo, in Anjouan and levied direct and indirect taxes on the island, having emptied the coffers of the State.

Faced with such an exacerbation of the situation, which was a violation of the authority of the State, the Government was obliged to send a military mission to Anjouan to re-establish public and Republican order.

This mission, which began on the morning of 2 September, had nearly achieved its goal by 4 September, without bloodshed. But the subsequent turn of events led the President of the Republic, still determined to preserve civil order, to take the necessary emergency measures under article 20 of the Constitution of the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros, dealing with full powers.

This is why, acting under this Article, a State transition commission was appointed and given the prerogatives normally given members of the Government: to carry on the conduct of current affairs of State; to continue the indispensable negotiations begun with the OAU, the United Nations, the League of Arab States and all other bodies involved in the search for a solution to the crisis afflicting the country; to implement and give concrete form to solutions agreed on, in consultation with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF); to prepare for signature the programme of adjustment with the Bretton Woods institutions; and to prepare the final procedures for ultimate signature of the eighth European Development Fund, in collaboration with the European Union and the countries of the Asian, Caribbean and Pacific region.

During this transitional stage it should be possible to restructure institutions with a view to giving the islands of the Republic broad management autonomy and more active participation in the process of development in the islands of the Comoros as a whole.

At a time when my country's territorial integrity remains threatened, at a time when arbitrary separatist actions are again battering my country, I should like from this rostrum to launch a heartfelt appeal to the entire international community to assist the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros to eradicate the ills which are destroying it, namely underdevelopment and destabilization.

While it is true that we must first and foremost count on our own strengths, the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros also knows that it can count on the United Nations, our Organization, with its specialized agencies, including the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization.

The Comoros also knows it can count on OAU, the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and the European Union.

We can only reiterate here our full confidence in, and deep gratitude for, the tireless and determined efforts they have unceasingly made to ensure the economic development of, and peace and security for, the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros.

After this broad overview of the terrible events which my country is enduring, we are obliged to note that, today, more than ever before, the question of underdevelopment remains the major source of threats to peace and international security.

While we recognize that on the threshold of the third millennium our Organization remains the guarantor of the emancipation of peoples and the progressive elimination of poverty, it is also incontestable that the daily struggle with hunger, malnutrition and illiteracy and the problem of ensuring good health for everyone are challenges to our collective conscience.

What can more significantly illustrate the will of our institution to eradicate these scourges than the series of conferences which have been held throughout the past decade? I have in mind the New York World Summit for Children, the Rio Conference on Environment and Development, the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development, the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development, the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, the Istanbul Conference on Human Settlements, and the Rome World Food Summit. All these conferences aroused great hopes in all of mankind but their effects are still in an embryonic stage, particularly for the developing, least developed and island countries.

The hopes born of these international meetings are like a distant horizon that seems to recede as one gets nearer to it.

The Government of the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros reaffirms its support for the reforms recommended for our Organization, in particular those relating to the enlargement of the Security Council, since our evolving world has taken on new contours. These include new forms of violence, and our current means of dealing with them seems increasingly inadequate and unsuitable. The strengthening and maintenance of peace within States is today a new concern of our Organization, confronted as it is by civil wars, genocide, ethnic cleansing, terrorism, mercenaries and all forms of transnational crime.

The new international political landscape is, to be sure, a result of the new forms of tension, which tend to overshadow some of the conflicts well known to our Organization.

Since horrors know no limits, the Comoros Government is still concerned by the resurgence of violence in the Middle East, which has had a negative effect on the dynamism that had been set in motion by the signing of the Oslo agreements between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

Thus the provocations by the new Israeli authorities, the continuation of the settlement policy, the closing off of Palestinian territories, the demolition of houses, and the arbitrary arrests all furnish eloquent proof of the impediments to the peace process.

The new conflagration in that part of the world requires the international community to redouble its vigilance so as to ensure the peoples of the subregion the right to peaceful coexistence, for which one of the prerequisites is respect for the right of the Palestinians to a free and independent State.

Along the same lines, the occupation of part of Lebanese national territory by foreign troops is a serious threat that every day delays the national reconciliation of a long-suffering people that continues to seek stability.

From East to West, from North to South, other conflicts with various motivations continue to rage and pose serious threats to international peace and security.

While it is true that it has been possible to find the beginnings of solutions thanks to the perseverance of our Organization, it remains no less true that other solutions which have been advocated have proved of limited value.

The pictures of desolation, exposing the sufferings endured by countries subject to economic embargoes, lead us to question the effectiveness of a solution that first and foremost punishes vulnerable and innocent populations.

Africa unfortunately has not been spared the cycle of violence, despite the resolution of certain conflicts that had long plunged this continent into fratricidal wars. Other hotbeds of tension remain, and Africa therefore continues to be at the forefront of the international community's concerns. In the Great Lakes region, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan and Somalia continue to be theatres for bloody and tragic events.

Faced with all these situations of crisis and conflict, my Government unreservedly supports the initiatives underway to achieve negotiated settlements.

As for Sierra Leone, the Comorian Republic most firmly condemns the violent coup against the leaders of Sierra Leone, whom the people of that country — wishing to break with the practices of a bygone age — legally and democratically chose.

As two sides of the same coin, at the international level, political and economic situations remain closely linked. Thus this gloomy view of the international political landscape is made even darker by the disheartening international economic environment.

Despite the priorities and objectives set forth by the new development strategies, we are obliged to note that

the results are less than expected. But we venture to hope that the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, which recently became a supplement to the New Agenda, will provide the impetus to speed up Africa's integration into the international system of trade. Under this system, small States continue to experience reduced prices for their raw materials, and their burden of debt is becoming ever more unbearable.

The Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros, a small island State and one of the least developed States, shares the plight of those who are excluded from the international market. For, in addition to limited natural resources and the high cost of international transportation, it suffers from other political and structural restraints, which are slowing down its socio-economic development.

Given the virtually chronic instability that has characterized the recent history of the Comoros, the Comorian people are obliged to ask whether they have the right to peace and the right to life.

The Comorian people remain convinced that the search for a just and lasting solution enabling it to embark on a path of harmonious socio-economic development necessarily hinges on a final settlement to the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte, which is under French administration. I reserve the right to speak on this subject during the debate. For there can be no doubt that the present events in my country are a corollary to the incomplete decolonization and to the socio-economic crisis from which the Comorian people have suffered.

In conclusion, I associate myself with previous speakers in extending to the brotherly and friendly Government and people of Indonesia condolences on the crash of the aircraft that claimed so many lives, as well as our profound grief at the disaster that their country has suffered as a result of the fires that are devastating their forests.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ohn Gyaw, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Myanmar.

Mr. Gyaw (Myanmar): Allow me to begin by congratulating His Excellency Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko on his unanimous election as President of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. His outstanding diplomatic skills and long experience in foreign affairs assure us that he will lead our deliberations at the present session to a successful conclusion.

May I also pay our tribute to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail of Malaysia for his sagacious and exemplary stewardship of the Assembly at its fifty-first session.

I also wish to extend our warm congratulations to the new Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his assumption of his high office. The new Secretary-General has already proved his dynamism and dedication in the discharge of his responsibilities — not the least by providing us with his comprehensive United Nations reform programme for our consideration at this session of the General Assembly.

This is a time for change and renewal for the United Nations. The reform package, proposed by Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations in his report, "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform", is the most comprehensive proposal on the reform of the United Nations in the 52-year history of the Organization. Specific proposals, contained therein, need to be most carefully studied, and considered by all of us. Another question of reform which is the subject of intensive consultations and discussions among Member States at present is that of the composition and working methods of the Security Council.

Both the reform of the United Nations and that of the Security Council are imperatives of our times. These institutions and their working methods need to be changed and adjusted appropriately to reflect the present-day realities. With regard to the reform of the United Nations in general, we believe that there is a need for a thorough review of the United Nations Charter. Many profound changes have taken place in the world since the Charter was framed 52 years ago. We are of the view that the role of the General Assembly should be enhanced in line with Articles 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 of the Charter. The practice whereby a few great Powers hijack important political issues for settlement among themselves in the Security Council, bypassing the Assembly is not basically consistent with the spirit and principles of the Charter. Nor is it in the interest of the entire membership of the United Nations and the interest of the Organization. The General Assembly should be more actively involved in the settlement of important political issues before the United Nations. We wish to see more intimate and dynamic cooperation between the General Assembly and the Security Council. Moreover, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council should play a greater role in the coordination and direction of global macroeconomic policy matters.

With regard to the reform of the Security Council, there is an emerging convergence of views among Member States that the membership of the Council should be expanded to reflect the present-day realities, although differences of opinion still exist on the modalities of enlarging the Council. Myanmar endorses the position of the non-aligned countries that the Council should be enlarged by not less than 11 new members and that such an enlargement should be based on the principles of sovereign equality of States, equitable geographical distribution and rotation. Imbalance in the composition of the Security Council and gross under-representation in it of the non-aligned countries should be corrected in order to reflect the universal character of the world Organization. In the category of permanent members, there are a few interesting proposals, including that of Mr. Razali Ismail, President of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, recommending an increase of five new permanent members, two industrialized States and one State each from regions of Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, respectively. There are also proposals to rotate the three new regional permanent seats. These proposals deserve our serious consideration. We believe that there is also a need for democratization and greater transparency in the working methods of the Council.

May I now touch briefly on the reform package, proposed by the Secretary-General. We welcome the main thrust of his proposals for cost-cutting and streamlining of the United Nations institutions and services. The important thing is that the reform of the United Nations should truly benefit the entire membership, of which the majority are developing countries. Our vision is a leaner and more efficient United Nations that can more effectively respond to the challenges of our time and better serve the interests of the entire membership of the Organization. In this respect, we need to examine most carefully whether the new senior executive posts it is proposed to create are really necessary and whether emphasis and focus on institutional reforms are rightly placed.

These proposed reforms, if and when approved by the General Assembly and implemented, will have far-reaching effects on the Organization and will go a long way in determining how well the United Nations will be equipped to meet new challenges in the twenty-first century. Accordingly, we should not rush into reform measures for their own sake, showing undue haste. We should undertake a most careful examination and a thorough discussion of these proposals before taking firm decisions in this regard.

Myanmar is an ardent advocate of stepping up international disarmament efforts with a view to making further advances in this important area of our collective endeavour. We welcome the proposal by the Secretary-General in his reform package to upgrade the Centre for Disarmament Affairs to the Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation.

Today, the post-cold-war international political climate is conducive to arms limitations and disarmament. Last year, the General Assembly successfully adopted the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We are encouraged to learn that the Preparatory Commission for the Organization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is making good progress. However, it was disconcerting to learn of the recent subcritical non-explosive nuclear tests carried out by a nuclear-weapon State. Such subcritical tests run counter to the spirit of the CTBT and to the cause of nuclear disarmament. We wish to see the cessation of all weapon-related nuclear tests — be they explosive or non-explosive, subcritical or supracritical — in all environments for all time.

In the field of arms limitations and disarmament, we attach the highest importance to nuclear disarmament and elimination of weapons of mass destruction. At the historic golden jubilee session of the United Nations General Assembly, Myanmar submitted, with the overwhelming support of Member States, the draft resolution that became resolution 50/70 P, entitled "Nuclear disarmament", calling upon the nuclear-weapon States to undertake a phased programme of progressive and balanced deep reductions of nuclear weapons with a view to the total elimination of these weapons within a time-bound framework and calling upon the Conference on Disarmament to establish, on a priority basis, an ad hoc committee to commence multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament.

Since the adoption of resolution 50/70 P by the General Assembly in 1995, there has been a ground swell of renewed interest in and support for nuclear disarmament worldwide. In their advisory opinion of 8 July 1996, all Judges of the International Court of Justice unanimously reaffirmed the existence of a legal obligation for all States, including nuclear-weapon States, to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. There has also been a clamour for nuclear disarmament by several groups of experts, groups of ex-military officials from

some nuclear-weapon States and public organizations in various countries around the world.

At the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, my delegation once again successfully submitted a follow-up resolution — resolution 51/45 O — on the same subject. My delegation will submit another follow-up draft resolution on nuclear disarmament at this year's session as well. We hope that, in view of its immense political importance, our draft resolution will enjoy the overwhelming support of Member States, as in previous years.

The recent Conference held in Oslo from 1 to 19 September negotiated a draft convention to place a total ban on anti-personnel landmines. We are supportive of banning the export and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. We believe, however, that every country is entitled to exercise the right of self-defence, enshrined in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, in matters of its national defence. In our view, the real problem lies in the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines and the export and trade in these weapons. It is the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines that is actually killing and maiming innocent children, women and men the world over, and it is the export and trade in these mines that is causing their proliferation, leading to their indiscriminate use. We should effectively address these real issues, rather than reach out for an indiscriminate and all-encompassing total ban on anti-personnel landmines.

Next year, 1998, will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Significant and substantial advances have been achieved by the United Nations in the promotion and protection of human rights in the past 50 years. Nowadays, increasing importance and emphasis have been placed on the promotion and protection of human rights.

We are all for the promotion and protection of basic human rights, including the right to development. There is no question about that. But when it comes to the application of human rights standards, we are concerned by the deviation by certain Western countries from the criteria of universality, objectivity and non-selectivity enshrined in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights. The politicization of human rights questions and the selectivity and use of double standards run counter to the spirit and basic norms of human rights.

Myanmar has been unfairly treated in this matter and has been singled out for censure by certain Western countries under the guise of the promotion and protection of human rights. The fact is that never in our post-independence history have we in Myanmar enjoyed such economic growth; never have the Myanmar people better enjoyed the basic human rights to peace and stability, shelter, clothing and food than at present. Those Western countries turn a blind eye to all these positive developments and accomplishments of the Government in my country and indulge in the ritual of unfounded fabricated charges against my country. To cite a Myanmar saying, their ignorance of the realities and misjudgment may be likened to that of a quack doctor who ignores the fact that the patient is a man and gives him a gynaecological diagnosis. A man must not be accused or censured for the offences he has not committed.

For our part, we have cooperated with the United Nations to the fullest extent possible. Myanmar has been engaged in a continuing dialogue with the United Nations. From 1994 onwards, I myself, as a representative of the Myanmar Government, have held discussions with the Secretary-General and his representatives at United Nations Headquarters in New York. Assistant Secretary-General Mr. Alvaro de Soto, representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, has visited Myanmar several times and has met and held discussions with officials of the Government. There have also been several visits by the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights. Moreover, the Myanmar Government has fully responded to queries on human rights situations and provided the full and comprehensive information sought by the United Nations and its subsidiary bodies. We shall continue this cooperation with the United Nations.

The spread of narcotic drugs is a growing international concern. Myanmar has always been in the forefront of the war on illicit drugs. A few facts and figures will speak for themselves.

In the military operations from 1988 to the end of August 1997 by the Myanmar Armed forces to interdict drug traffickers, 776 members of the Armed Forces, including 25 commissioned officers, sacrificed their lives; and 2351 members, including 84 commissioned officers, sustained injuries.

From 1989 to date, operations to destroy narcotic drugs have been carried out 11 times in Yangon;

operations to destroy narcotic drugs, drug refineries and poppy plantations have been carried out 18 times by the local populace in frontier areas; a total of 36,682.03 acres of poppy plantations have been destroyed. All these operations took place in the presence of foreign journalists and diplomats.

Myanmar has a comprehensive legal framework to combat drug abuse, including money laundering. Under the 1993 Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law, money laundering and the acquisition of property by the illegal means of drug trafficking are strictly prohibited. Stern punitive measures for such criminal offences are prescribed and a separate body — the Property Examination Committee — was constituted effectively to deal with these offences.

Myanmar's cooperation with other countries in mutual legal assistance in the suppression of narcotic drugs is exemplified by the handing-over of the drug trafficker Mr. Li Yun Ching by the Myanmar authorities to the Thai authorities on 17 May 1997 during the goodwill visit of Thai Prime Minister General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh to Myanmar.

A most significant accomplishment by Myanmar in recent times in this respect is the declaration of Mong-la Special Zone (4) of the Eastern Shan State as a "drug-free zone" as of 22 April 1997. Special Zone (2) of the Eastern Shan State and Special Zones (1) and (2) in Kachin State have been designated for establishment as "drug-free zones". Effective measures are being implemented to totally eradicate drug abuse in these areas. We are confident that these areas will be totally drug free in the near future. By establishing an increasing number of such drug-free zones and by other effective measures of suppression of narcotic drugs, we envision and strive to achieve the total eradication of drug abuse in Myanmar in the not-too-distant future.

In fairness to all, it would be hard to find other countries that have made sacrifices of such magnitude in terms of loss of life and limb of the members of their armed forces and have carried out such massive destruction of narcotic drugs. No candid observer, free from any prejudice against Myanmar, can deny these concrete facts. But certain Westerners, bearing prejudice and malice against Myanmar, are pointing accusing fingers at my country on all sorts of fabricated charges. Nothing can be further from the truth. So glaring is their distortion of facts that we can only say that the analogy of the quack doctor I have quoted above also applies in this instance.

As this is a time for change and renewal for the United Nations, so it is for the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). In this year of the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the Association, ASEAN, at its ministerial meeting in Kuala Lumpur in July this year, admitted Laos and Myanmar, bringing its membership to nine. By so doing, ASEAN has demonstrated to the world the solidarity among the South-East Asian countries. We are confident that this will lead to the further expansion of the membership of the Association to 10 in the near future. By this expansion, ASEAN has once again proven its relevance, viability and dynamism as a regional organization.

Myanmar is also taking an active part in regional economic cooperation. An important step taken by my country recently is Myanmar's joining of the Bangladesh-India-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation (BIST-EC) in August this year.

Through its pursuit of an independent and active foreign policy, Myanmar has consistently contributed to peace and stability in the region and beyond. As a member of ASEAN and of the Non-Aligned Movement, Myanmar will continue this contribution through its active participation in international and regional affairs in future as well.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, His Excellency Mr. Ismail Cem.

Mr. Cem (Turkey): It is a great pleasure for me to congratulate Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly. I am confident that under his able leadership, the work of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly will be a success. I should also like to express our appreciation to Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia for the way in which he presided over the General Assembly during its previous session. I also express my warm congratulations to His Excellency Kofi Annan on his election to the post of Secretary-General of the United Nations.

The relative euphoria created by the end of the cold war is being replaced by a sense of realism. Although the possibility of a global confrontation has been considerably reduced, ensuring security and preserving stability continue to be a major concern for the international community. We are witnessing the eruption of conflicts and serious tensions of a regional character as well as within individual States.

Critical disparities in economic and social conditions exist around the globe. Large segments of the world's population live in conditions of dire poverty. Achieving sustainable development remains a great challenge for the world community. On the other hand, the contemporary values we share, such as democracy, pluralism, tolerance, human rights and gender equality, require constant attention and effort.

Against this backdrop, international and regional organizations and, in particular, the United Nations, are in the process of redefining their role and functions in order to cope with new realities and challenges. The discussions and recent efforts to reform the United Nations have produced creative recommendations. Here, I wish to congratulate the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report. The far-reaching and substantive reform programme proposed therein satisfies our expectations. We strongly support the reform programme. On the other hand, we also share the serious concerns of the Secretary-General with regard to the need to put the Organization on a sound financial basis.

We commend the Secretary-General for attaching the highest priority to the goals of alleviating poverty and enhancing development. This is indispensable for the achievement and maintenance of peace and security, both within and among nations. In this context, we appreciate the approach taken by the Secretary-General that the envisaged coordination of the Development Group must be done so as not to weaken in any way the authority and independence of the institutions in question, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in particular.

Making human rights an integral part of all relevant United Nations operations is also a commendable goal. We are pleased to see an eminent personality at the head of United Nations activities in the human rights field. The fiftieth anniversary, in 1998, of the adoption by the General Assembly of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will provide the opportunity to reiterate our commitment to promote human rights all over the world.

Elevating the standard of human rights to its highest level is the foremost duty and obligation of each State towards its own people. I should like to draw attention to the human rights problems and to the discrimination faced in particular by migrant workers and their families in some developed countries. The protection and promotion of their human, economic, social, cultural and political rights are matters of major concern in the human rights field.

In this respect, Turkey supports the idea of a world conference on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. It would be a milestone in the decades-long struggle waged by the United Nations against racism and racial discrimination.

Turkey also supports the efforts envisaged in the reform programme to enhance the capabilities of the United Nations to deal with transnational organized crime, narcotics and terrorism. One of the most important threats our world faces today is problems related to drug abuse. The special session of the United Nations to be held next year will enable us to chart the way for the new measures that must be taken in view of the threat posed by drug trafficking.

The scourge of our age, no doubt, is terrorism. It is a threat to human rights and democratic institutions. It violates the most fundamental of all human rights: the right to life. It does not recognize boundaries. International cooperation is imperative in the fight against terrorism, and countries that refrain from participating in this cooperation must be condemned by the international community. We believe that the time has come to draft a global treaty on combating terrorism. In the same vein, we think that terrorist crimes should be included within the competence of the international criminal court that is to be established.

The Secretary-General has proposed significant measures that bring the arms-control agenda to the forefront of multilateral cooperation. Renewed emphasis should be placed on the work of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, with a view to ending production of fissile material for weapons purposes.

The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms should become an effective tool for monitoring arms transfers. Likewise, the international community should exert vigorous efforts to end illicit arms trafficking as a key element in the international struggle against terrorism.

Peacekeeping stands out as one of the most significant undertakings of the United Nations. The development of the peacekeeping capability of the United Nations remains a pressing need, and one that Turkey supports wholeheartedly. Turkey has taken part, and continues to participate, in several peacekeeping operations.

The ongoing work aimed at improving the representative character of the Security Council, increasing the Council's effectiveness and efficiency and adapting it to current realities of the international community is of particular importance. Reform of the Security Council constitutes the most serious attempt in years to enhance the role and moral authority not only of the Council, but also of the United Nations as a world organization.

We have to ensure that the envisaged enlargement and future composition of the Security Council will correspond to the expectations of the largest possible segment of the United Nations membership. The reform process has to take into consideration the fundamental changes which have taken place on the international scene and recognize the ability and readiness of a group of States to assume a greater and more effective role. These States should be given the opportunity to serve on the Security Council more frequently and on a more regular basis. Security Council reform is too important to be tied to the settlement of other issues; it must satisfy the general membership and enhance the role and authority of the Organization.

Located at the crossroads of three continents and several regions, including the Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus, the Mediterranean and Central Asia, Turkey stands ready to play an even greater role in the maintenance of peace, security and stability in its wider region. Today, the historical and cultural attributes of this vast geography, more than ever, find expression in Turkey's foreign policy in terms of hopes and opportunities.

A return to normalcy in Iraq and its reintegration with the international community are of vital importance for all countries of the region. Turkey supports the preservation of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq. Turkey has been fully complying with the United Nations sanctions regime imposed on Iraq. On the other hand, it is a fact that the sanctions have also produced totally unforeseen and negative effects on the economies of third countries as well as on the economy of Iraq. Turkey stands at the forefront of those countries which have been directly and most adversely affected by the sanctions regime. This unacceptable situation reminds us of the very pertinent remark of the former Secretary-General that

> "Sanctions are a measure taken collectively by the United Nations to maintain or restore international peace and security. The costs involved ... should be borne ... by all Member States and not exclusively by the few who have the misfortune to be neighbours or major economic partners of the target country." [*A/50/60, para. 73*]

We expect the Security Council to expeditiously consider Turkey's application to the sanctions committee, and to take appropriate action.

The Middle East peace process has been the single most important positive development in that fragile region in the recent past. However, events have recently taken, rather unexpectedly, an unfortunate and dangerous turn. Israeli settlement activities in the occupied territories, carried out despite the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and despite the provisions of the peace accords, and abhorrent terrorist activities by the enemies of peace have placed the peace process under a very severe strain. We urge the parties to do their utmost to establish mutual trust, without which it will be impossible to attain the objectives of the peace process.

Afghanistan is another conflict area where the international community has so far been unable to help bring about a just and lasting solution. At present, even the national unity of the Afghan people is at stake. It is most unfortunate that the warring factions have been fervently pursuing the military option. Regrettably, one of the major obstacles to convincing the factions that a military solution is unattainable is the continuing supply of weapons, equipment and ammunition, along with military involvement from outside.

My country has close historical ties with Afghanistan and the Afghan people. We feel very strongly about the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan. Taking this opportunity, I wish to reiterate Turkey's readiness to host, in cooperation with the United Nations, an intra-Afghan meeting if and when all the parties are ready to participate.

Turkey attaches particular importance to bringing its historical, close relations of friendship and cooperation with Balkan countries to the highest level. We support the multilateral initiatives aimed at securing peace, stability and cooperation in South-East Europe. Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to be a focus of the international community. The preservation of the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a continuing responsibility undertaken by the United Nations. The full implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement has not yet been secured. While the Federation has been working hard to implement the

Peace Agreement, other quarters have been obstructing the whole process. The successful effort in July on the part of the Stabilization Force (SFOR) to apprehend and bring before the Tribunal war crimes suspects who remain at large was a commendable move. In order to achieve reconciliation and ensure peace and security in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is essential to prove that crimes committed will not go unpunished. The return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes constitutes another essential element for achieving lasting peace and stability in the country.

SFOR, to which my country is a troop contributor, has played a significant role in Bosnia for the maintenance of peace and order since the signing of the Peace Agreement. We believe that the continued presence of an international force in the area is crucial for durable peace.

Albania and its people have passed through very difficult times. Ensuring internal peace and stability in Albania was a prerequisite for the preservation of peace and stability in the whole region. The multinational protection force, in which, again, my country took part, succeeded in restoring stability and order in the country. It was thus possible for the Albanian people to hold the parliamentary elections that paved the way for the resolution of the crisis.

However, Albania still faces a difficult road on the way to full administrative, social and economic recovery. The need for concerted international support remains. Sharing close historical and cultural ties with the Albanian people, Turkey will continue to be of support to Albania.

In our relations with Greece, our principal objective is to promptly tackle, through a substantive and result-oriented dialogue, the issues, mostly related to the Aegean, that still stand between our two countries. To this end, we have made several appeals to Greece to agree to a dialogue and to begin a process with a view to settling our differences.

We do not rule out any agreed method of peaceful settlement of our differences. Furthermore, we have unilaterally implemented a number of confidence-building measures in the hope that they would be reciprocated. We expect that the group of "Wisemen", consisting of two non-governmental personalities from Turkey and Greece, respectively, will be able to finally meet without further delay. This group has the task of preparing a report to be submitted to both Governments with non-binding recommendations for dealing with the issues.

We also eagerly await the translation into concrete deeds, to promote better relations between our two countries, of the understanding reached during the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) summit in Madrid last July. Delaying this process by linking it to pre-conditions or artificial issues will not serve the interests of either country.

It is evident that our bilateral problems cannot be resolved by the effort of Turkey alone, and that mutual commitment and the display of goodwill by both parties are imperative.

The Caucasus, as a gateway between East and West, attracts world-wide attention politically and economically. We attach the highest significance to peace and stability, as well as to the preservation and consolidation of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries of that neighbouring region. In this context, it is vitally important to bring about a just and lasting solution to the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia on the basis of international law. The Nagorny-Karabakh dispute still stands out as the principal obstacle to peace, security and enhanced bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the region, since more than one fifth of Azeri territory remains under occupation. We urge that the Minsk process and the decisions reached in that process will be taken seriously by all parties and that they will be implemented.

The efforts made within this context by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)/Minsk Group should be carefully considered by all parties concerned. As a member of the Group, Turkey will continue to contribute to these efforts.

We welcome the recent August meeting in Tbilisi between the parties to the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict and the signing of a statement by the leaders on the peaceful and mutually acceptable solution to the conflict. In this regard, I would like to stress that Turkey is committed to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders as stated in the Lisbon document of the OSCE.

The Cyprus question has been on the agenda of the Security Council for almost 34 years. This roughly corresponds to the presence of the United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) in the island. It may be high time to find a real answer to why a solution has eluded us all this time in spite of the dramatic changes that have occurred both on the international

scene and in Cyprus, and despite all the commendable efforts of successive United Nations Secretaries-General.

After so many years it would be wrong, I believe, to continue to link a 34-year-old failure to the lack of political will or to the intransigence of one side or the other. We should ask ourselves where we failed, why the mistrust is still so deep in the island and whether we have made the right diagnosis of this problem.

There are two distinct peoples, two separate administrations and two democracies on the island. Along with these realities, bicommunality, bizonality and the maintenance of the 1960 system of guarantees should be considered as incontestable foundations for a settlement. It is obvious that reluctance to recognize the realities in the island, and the tendency to apply pressure to one side alone, have not led us to a negotiated solution. The last two rounds of talks, in Troutbeck and in Glion, have solidified this perception. We do believe that the lessons of the past and current developments on the international scene should compel us to adopt a realistic approach to the Cypriot issue. The establishment of an equilibrium between the legal and political status of the two sides to the dispute could be a starting point for a rethinking process.

Time is of the essence in initiating such a process since one can foresee that in early 1998 a chain of events might hinder efforts to find a negotiated settlement, and further increase the tension both on the island and in the region. As witnessed in the recent face-to-face talks, the pursuit of European Union membership by the Greek Cypriot side has become the main impediment to progress, rendering the negotiating process increasingly meaningless and an agreed settlement even more elusive. Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot side firmly believe that efforts to carry forward this process will cast a shadow on the talks and might destroy the very foundation of the negotiation process.

On various occasions, we have made our position clear on the issue of European Union membership of Cyprus. The 1959 and 1960 Treaties on Cyprus established an internal institutional balance between the two communities of Cyprus and, simultaneously, an external balance of interests between Turkey and Greece in their relationship with Cyprus. These Treaties unequivocally preclude the membership of Cyprus in any international organization, or political or economic union in which both Turkey and Greece are not members. Therefore, from a legal point of view, Cyprus can join the European Union only after a solution and simultaneously with Turkey. From a political point of view, this also appears to be the only viable outcome. We continue to entertain the hope that those who are concerned will act with an awareness of their historical responsibility, as the time approaches toward a decision on an issue which will have a determining effect on the future course of events in Cyprus.

The deployment of S-300 missiles to southern Cyprus is another gloomy prospect. Coupled with ambitious rearmament efforts that the Greek Cypriot side has embarked upon, the purchase of highly sophisticated missiles aims at jeopardizing the security of the Turkish Cypriot people and of Turkey. We sincerely hope that in the end wisdom will prevail and this project, which may seriously affect peace and stability in the entire region, will be discontinued.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece, in his statement earlier this afternoon, referred in a misleading way to my country and to the Cyprus issue. My delegation will speak in exercise of its right of reply at a later stage in response to the allegations contained in that statement.

The challenges of building and preserving peace and of achieving development are closely linked. The United Nations, having successfully ended the first 50 years of its existence, is today well poised to take up these tasks. It is up to each Member State to make the best effort to contribute to this process. Turkey is determined to do its share. We sincerely hope that this session of the General Assembly will mark one more important step towards the realization of regional and global peace, stability, security, cooperation, solidarity and prosperity on the eve of a new millennium.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Panama, His Excellency Mr. Ricardo Alberto Arias, and I now call on him.

Mr. Arias (Panama) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The tragedy of the millions of human beings who are suffering the ravages of poverty affects Panama very deeply. This is a deplorable scourge which has reached intolerable levels. Those of us present here are facing the shameful paradox of having produced the highest level of wealth ever known to mankind while at the same time having the highest level of unemployment in our economies in history.

Poverty and exclusion are the battlefronts that call for political and moral will. From this standpoint, Panama is concerned that the tenor of this debate on the financial or military attributes of the many aspirants to membership of the Security Council may make us forget why the Organization was created.

Panama, a founding Member of the United Nations, signed the Charter of the United Nations to give a voice to those who had been silenced by colonialism and to those who clamoured for justice, freedom and development; to restore dignity to peoples such as mine that had been deprived of their sovereign rights; and to give those who had been discriminated against and persecuted the right to dream about a better world in which no one would be hated for the color of his skin or his beliefs, or for being part of a given ethnic group, or of one gender or the other.

Panama signed that beautiful document, a tribute to the humble of the Earth, in order to give democratic institutions, civil and political rights and multilateral forums to all those people — men and women of good will — who did not want war to return, destroying their homes, legacies, cities and towns and plots of land. They also did not want to see war rub out entire generations by sacrificing them to obsession, fanaticism and extremism.

Like many others here, Panama signed the San Francisco Charter so that the poor of the world and those suffering from disease and malnutrition would have two of the simplest and most moving of human attributes: faith and hope.

The more than 50 years that have passed since then have brought about considerable advances that have changed the face of the world. Many of them would not have been possible, however, if cooperation had not imprinted a new meaning and purpose on our Organization. In fact, few vestiges of colonialism remain to be solved; ethnic groups and nationalities, prohibited cultures and the prosecuted now work together in pride to design a polychromatic world that calls for equality in difference and tolerance towards diversity.

The number of nations which are Members of the United Nations has increased three-fold, and its agenda reflects their pain, suffering, struggles and aspirations. Its orientation and contents have changed, and everyone has been given a forum in which to express his opinions and find support and understanding.

Mr. Young (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), Vice-President, took the Chair.

If a planning board had tried to identify, as is now proposed, which problem had priority and deserved attention, financing and debate, the Security Council would never have met in my country, Panama, nor would that event have changed so decisively the course of negotiations when Panama attempted to regain its sovereignty and its Canal.

There are important achievements in the daily life of the United Nations. However, none of them would have been possible if the United Nations had not attained the quality, the representative nature and the legitimacy that it has achieved through universality. It must be recognized that there remain unacceptably acute differences and deficiencies, which are becoming more serious and are constantly and forcibly knocking at the very doors of our homes.

At the same time, thousands of people are dying before our very eyes because of hunger, intolerance, hatred, terrorism, fratricidal warfare, authoritarianism and violence; thousands of children are looking at us through television screens with languid and sad eyes, only to become mere statistics at the end of the programme. There are still those who peddle illusions, who would have us believe that conflicts reside at the end of a rifle and that they can be resolved by having more powerful rifles. The figures on what the world spends on weapons are so disproportionate when compared to expenditures for development that only mentioning them makes us ashamed.

We should have already learned the lesson that when people are motivated, for whatever reason, there is no bullet or defence system, no matter how sophisticated, that can eliminate the causes of conflict; that the instruments of force can lower the fever but they cannot eliminate the turmoil which causes it; and that there is no military solution to social and political problems. History, life's teacher, shows us that violence usually is the result, not the cause, of conflict; that war is more often than not the symptom rather than the cause of the ills; and that the only way to resolve conflicts and the violence that goes along with them is to act on their true, underlying causes: hunger, malnutrition and extreme poverty and the lack of means to overcome them; ethnic, gender and cultural discrimination; intolerance and authoritarianism; fundamentalism and political and religious persecution; unemployment, slave labour and immoral salaries;

humiliation and national oppression. The majority of us who came here over 50 years ago, as well as the many who arrived later, did so in order to find solidarity and to take refuge in the realm of law, not to shield ourselves in a new military alliance or to take shelter in the shadow of a cannon. Circumstances then forced us to live under an ominous nuclear balance which made the interrelations of military forces the determining factor in international relations.

Today — under a completely different setting in which the balance of power is measured in terms of the potential and economic strength of markets — nothing compels us to continue to live under the model of the cold war.

The greatest impending threat to international peace and security is poverty, whose reach is as extensive as that of the most pervasive of plagues. Which current or future Security Council member's army will be able to put an end to the threat if it is the mother of all illnesses and resentments and harvests more human lives than any bacteria, virus or ancient or modern plague?

If what we are contemplating is a resurgence of the old and festering conflicts which were frozen by the cold war, would we not be substituting the ancient balance of bipolar nuclear terror for a new and expanded military alliance to resolve those conflicts under the umbrella of the United Nations?

Panama certainly does not believe that force is not necessary as a deterrent, nor are we unaware that such a tool in responsible hands is useful, particularly when it is legitimated by world-wide consensus, as the Charter proposes.

What concerns us is that most of the discussion in the world about the reform of the United Nations disproportionately stresses the use of force and disregards what is important, and indeed imperative — that is to say, cooperation for development.

Hence, to assert that the most important function of the United Nations is to have a big force to maintain international peace and security, while at the same time proposing the reduction, streamlining and elimination of the Organization's social and humanitarian components, raises important questions about the final nature of our reform and modernization exercise.

To maintain that financial and material contributions to peacekeeping operations should be decisive in determining who can and who cannot sit on the Council, while at the same time stating that social and humanitarian tasks, development programmes and environmental protection programmes should be placed in other kinds of management and organization categories, greatly concerns us. This compendium of proposals must be rebalanced and given its proper dimension.

If what we are going to discuss is the package, then the only one we should talk about is the package of the fundamental principles of the United Nations already enshrined in the Charter.

From that integral perspective, the purpose of politically and financially strengthening the Organization, and the Security Council in particular, is to ensure that it can fully discharge its major mission: the promotion of social and economic and human development as the most effective way to prevent conflicts.

The profound developments in the last 50 years have changed the international community. The deepest change has occurred in the parameters of, and the language used to define, relations among countries. The Powers of the past no longer exist, and new Powers are emerging — even though there are obvious military weaknesses.

It is no longer war that marks the trend towards contemporary development or the course or content of international life. Why organize the United Nations on the basis of what no longer exists? Now it is peace, trade, the sharing of the fruits of knowledge and technology, and the deep changes designed to ensure higher levels of tolerance and open-mindedness that are features of international coexistence. It is not military tools to prevent war that have to be strengthened but, rather, the tools to build peace, to achieve international cooperation, as is stated in the Charter, in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all (Article 3). International peace is not guaranteed by rifles or cannons, or by one or several allied Powers. This has been proved by recent, and not so recent but no less painful, experiences.

The small and brave country Uruguay, which makes the highest per capita contribution for peace-keeping, has taught us such a good lesson in this respect.

If it is true that the greatest restriction on creativity, thought and intelligence is dialectically established by language itself, then we have to cast aside once and for all the language and the thinking process left over from the cold war. We must design something that more appropriately represents what we wish to do.

Panama does not feel that its juridical status has been diminished when it acknowledges that some countries have special attributes or can better discharge the tasks of the Security Council. On the one hand, the problem is to define these tasks, to determine whether what we want is a guardian or a promoter of development and cooperation. On the other hand, the problem relates to the degree of responsibility a member of the Council has *vis-a-vis* the rest of us. For, if its membership of the Council is based solely on its individual attributes — rejecting any kind of representation of us — then it can sit in that seat in the Council until someone simply wrests the seat from it by violence.

Everything indicates that we should define these tasks in a coherent manner in keeping with the whole set of purposes of the United Nations. From this standpoint, each region has to determine the degree of representativity and responsibility that its members should have, as well as who can occupy those seats. It is difficult to think that after the Members of the United Nations have acquired such long and productive experience of working in regional groups and organizations, everything would be discarded in order to vote for a country on an individual basis. We would like to know what benefit there would be in reigning in a vacuum.

Furthermore, neither ideological nor military blocs appear any longer on the map of the world, nor should geographical distribution alone. These have been nothing but obsolete instruments which have served to draw simplistic and arbitrary borders and, hence, to face us at times with tragedies.

This new international reality must be fully recognized. The new borders that are now forming are trade, ethnic, religious, and cultural borders, and it is precisely because they were disregarded during the cold war that we are still faced today with all these upheavals. It is those upheavals that seduce even the most conservative among us into being guided by one of the left-over thoughts of the bipolar world — *vis pacem para bellum*.

On the other hand, if we really feel comfortable with one-third of the membership not rotating and two-thirds of the membership rotating, then it would be sane and judicious for any expansion to maintain those proportions, which practice has shown to be efficient and which have been agreed to.

Why, then, should we go on using language that draws a distinction between the regular budget and the peacekeeping budget? This accounting dichotomy became a policy and crudely revealed how individual interests could separate the package from the founding principles, to such an extent that they would be truly contradictory. There are those who say that it is shameful for the regular budget to have to be financed out of the peacekeeping budget. I would say that it is even more shameful that the disproportion in amounts, both in payments and in voluntary contributions, is so overwhelming that the social and humanitarian functions are now secondary to the security functions, as if, in the final analysis, civic-action programmes are dependent upon military operations. This reflects the unstated reversal of focus between the secondary: the operations for the maintenance of security, and the primary: the human-development programmes.

A single budget, which conforms to a periodically agreed-upon political strategy, should respond in each case to the changing challenges of the new international dynamism. In our view, it is not compatible with the new spirit of democratization in our Organization or with the new international realities for one or a few countries to subsidize the entire budget in a disproportionate way, for this can lead to the danger of concentrating the decision-making power and thereby affecting the Organization's functioning.

In the final analysis — and we do not want to give lessons to anyone — we feel that what is necessary is a good arsenal of general and flexible criteria, the key to the search for consensus — that is, representativity, legitimacy, non-discrimination, equity and legal equality. We must move from the particular and discuss individual aspirations, in order to design a compendium of criteria that would be applicable to all, whether or not their seats on the Security Council rotated.

From that standpoint, we think that we should not discuss the veto in the abstract, as a privilege or as a category in and of itself. With the passage of time, there has been a distortion in the original spirit of the Charter, under which the members of the Security Council were to represent in the Security Council the general interests

of the international community, not act in accordance with their exclusive military or political strategic interests.

In that context, part of the reform should be the negotiation of an agreement restricting the use of the veto to what is stipulated in Chapter VII and to what was agreed in the gentlemen's agreement in London 1948.

From that standpoint, we need a formula that can prevent a single country from standing in the way of the general interest. One such formula would be allowing vetoes to be overridden by a two-thirds majority. The optimal solution, of course, would be to get rid of the veto.

Let me here and now thank the public and private sectors of the international community for the support and solidarity given to my country during the Universal Congress on the Panama Canal.

This is a good opportunity to report that Panama is continuing to take the necessary legislative and administrative steps to turn this international public service over to an agency that would be constitutionally autonomous — administratively, politically and financially. Panama is certain that scrupulous observance of this autonomous status will make the interocean waterway more competitive and more efficient and will also allow the agency to take advantage of the many opportunities that will be created by the Canal's upcoming incorporation into the Panamanian economy.

We must remember that until now military needs for the Canal have always been dominant, and this has made it impossible to exploit the Canal's many competitive advantages for trade and international civil-maritime activities. From this standpoint, Panama's greatest strategic concern during the transition process has been to gain complete control of the Canal so as to undertake a vast, multimillion-dollar programme to modernize and widen it. This programme includes widening the Gaillard Cut — a critical area for ships crossing from the waters of Lake Gatun — as well as the systematic studies undertaken in cooperation with the United States, Japan and the European Union in order to construct the third system of locks, which will allow passage of ships weighing up to 150,000 dead-weight tons.

Given the international importance of the Panamanian interoceanic waterway, we intend to announce formally to this General Assembly session that, in order to ensure respect for the neutrality of the Panama Canal, Panama will conduct its external relations in such a way as to reduce international tension and conflict and not to get embroiled in issues that would require us to take sides for or against members of the international community with which we have friendly relations, or for or against the community as a whole. We are convinced that this new policy is the most important contribution Panama can make to international peace and security.

From this standpoint, we will concentrate our efforts on contributing to understanding, cooperation and friendly relations among peoples and governments. The Panama Canal, as an international public service, must be open to all users, public and private, regardless of the flag they fly or the economic system they represent.

In this regard, we are pleased by our admission to the pro tem secretariat of the Rio Group as of 1998, and we are committed from now on to undertaking intensive diplomatic efforts to strengthen the Group's role as a leading forum for interregional and intra-regional discussion and political understanding.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, His Excellency, Mr. Jadranko Prlic.

Mr. Prlic (Bosnia and Herzegovina): I am particularly honoured to have the opportunity to address the fifty-second session of the General Assembly of the United Nations on behalf of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I would like, first, to extend my warm congratulations to our respected friend and colleague, His Excellency Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, on his accession to the presidency of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. Mr. Udovenko's rich experience and extensive knowledge of United Nations affairs are telling proof that this General Assembly session has outstanding leadership.

The destiny of Bosnia and Herzegovina has been closely linked to the United Nations since early 1992, when my country became a Member State. Bosnia and Herzegovina's struggle to survive as a sovereign state within its internationally recognized borders lasted four years. We believe we won the major battle in preserving the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country, but we know we still have a long way to go.

The role of the international community and the involvement of the United Nations in the Bosnia and Herzegovina crisis were overwhelming. Month after

month, the United Nations, led by the Security Council, stood firmly behind internationally accepted norms and principles in order to make possible a negotiated and peaceful solution in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Unfortunately — for subjective and objective reasons, most of which are well known to all of us — in spite of all the resolutions and decisions the tragedy in Bosnia and Herzegovina continued to take what was probably the heaviest toll of any modern conflict.

The events also proved that the United Nations was not ready to deal effectively with what was certainly one of the most complex crisis in our times. The conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina was, and still is, an important case study which should be carefully analysed in the context of the United Nations involvement mandate and its role in crisis situations.

But we respect the help and tireless efforts of the members of the United Nations mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina to help the civilian population survive. I would like to use this opportunity to say that we remember and greatly admire the members of the international community who lost their lives in the peace mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We were deeply saddened by the recent tragic accident which took the lives of 12 brave peace promoters, among them the Deputy to the High Representative, Ambassador Gerd Wagner.

We cannot forget the tens of thousands people who were killed or wounded, the thousands of missing and hundreds of thousands displaced persons and refugees. Heavy damage was inflicted on the economic, social, cultural and other sectors of life in Bosnia and Herzegovina. But ultimately it was the social tissue of Bosnia and Herzegovina that suffered the greatest damage. The striving for national domination, exclusivity and xenophobia, and also autism, have destroyed bridges of communication and have deepened the gap between various ethnic groups.

Given that the tragic consequences of the conflict remain, it will require a lot of wisdom, patience and hard work to overcome the many obstacles in our way. But we believe that it is time to turn resolutely towards the future. We must use this precious time to rebuild confidence and establish relations between different ethnic groups and among all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. These relations should be based on internationally accepted standards and norms of behaviour. In that context the promotion and protection of human rights is one of the core issues. Human rights are universally accepted and inherent to all human beings, and they must be respected.

Two years after the signatures on the Dayton Agreement stopped the negative current of events and marked the beginning of the peace process, Bosnia and Herzegovina is facing enormous tasks: rebuilding the war-torn country and simultaneously establishing a democratic system of governance and administration. In spite of a variety of problems and shortcomings, we feel that the positive energy necessary for such an endeavour is accumulating. Besides the continuous attention and support of the international community, we need the parties concerned in Bosnia and Herzegovina to show additional political goodwill if they want to see the peace process progress and lead, ultimately, to results.

The legal framework for this exceptionally complex goal was established in the Dayton Agreement. The Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina was drafted, taking into account the political reality and using as the point of departure the only possible formula: three peoples, two entities, one state. To make this rather unique arrangement viable, in accordance with the provisions of the Dayton Agreement, institutions at the state level have been established.

The Presidency, Council of Ministers and Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina are functioning but they have not yet reached the necessary optimal rhythm and performance. This represents a serious obstacle and must be overcome without any delay because of its direct influence on the functioning of the entire State system, and on the external relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as on the key development programmes.

At the lower level, the system of cantonal power and administration is taking shape. It encompasses a number of important duties and activities but also responsibilities, since through it equal representation and participation of different ethnic groups in power-sharing should be secured. This represents one of the pillars of the multi-ethnic, democratic State of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

But what is most important is full and unconditional compliance with all the provisions of the Dayton Agreement. That must be understood by all those who put their signatures on the peace agreements, and those who do not honour their obligations must face the consequences. I would also like to say that the successful organization of the municipal elections in Bosnia and

Herzegovina, held just a week ago, is of great significance. Imperfect as they may be, these elections represent a milestone on our complex and often difficult journey towards stable peace and in the building of the modern, democratic State of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The fact that the elections took place throughout the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with hardly any problems or any major incidents, demonstrates the readiness of all parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina to comply with the provisions of the Dayton Agreement.

The very fact that the majority of the population in this war-torn and exhausted country responded in an orderly fashion and presented themselves in large numbers at the voting stations speaks for itself. It is a clear signal that they want to take the destiny of Bosnia and Herzegovina in their own hands. It is also a testimony to their readiness to pursue the noble goal of healing the war wounds and starting to rebuild the bridges of cooperation, tolerance and mutual respect.

The post-war experience in Bosnia and Herzegovina underlines the importance of democratic reforms, the introduction of rule of law and the administration of justice in accordance with the highest standards, respect for human rights and the strengthening of public institutions. For a truly democratic society, it is of particular importance to open the space for free activities of civil society, citizens associations, various non-governmental organizations and religious communities. During the elections process, the significance of open, objective and truthful information delivered by free media was confirmed once again.

In order to achieve all of this, the presence of the international community is of critical importance. Help and support from the various organizations and agencies within the United Nations system is invaluable to Bosnia and Herzegovina and we are grateful for it.

Socio-economic development and the building of a democratic State are closely interrelated. Only with properly targeted help from the outside will Bosnia and Herzegovina be able to create a sustainable economic system and thus achieve a stable environment that is less exposed to crisis and conflict situations. Here we are talking about a close and mutually conditioned relationship between development, democracy and peace. The realization of this paradigm holds the key to the door for Bosnia and Herzegovina to catch up with the fast developing world.

Therefore, I am convinced that we all share the opinion that this should continue in order to implement a common long-term vision for a prosperous and stable Bosnia and Herzegovina. We have to move down this road swiftly and urgently. And this applies beyond the borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina; we cannot afford to delay stability in the region. In that context, I would like to underline one growing phenomenon of our time which is particularly relevant for Bosnia and Herzegovina: the interaction between the foreign and internal factors in the countries in transition. Only the combined efforts of the two can yield the desired results; yet the international factor must never forget that the case of each country is specific. Instead of a schematic and stereotypical approach, a new, inventive and flexible methodology and pattern of activities should apply. This would certainly contribute to a better focus for programmes and a higher degree of coordination. It would also prevent overlapping and inadequate spending of resources.

The purpose of my brief overview was to share with this body the recent experience in consolidating peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I am convinced that by the end of this debate we will be enriched with valuable ideas and proposals on how to continue and improve the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As the Secretary-General stated in his address, the international community must ensure that its collective investments — military, political and financial — have not been made in vain. We in Bosnia and Herzegovina share this approach entirely.

As a Member State, Bosnia and Herzegovina is closely following the ongoing process of reform of our Organization. The fifty-second session of the General Assembly is taking place at a time when the main features of the global political scene are rapidly changing. The new political and strategic structures are taking shape, with far-reaching consequences. With the cold war behind us, new prospects, with new fears and new challenges, are looming over the world. In such an environment, we attach the greatest importance to the place and the role of the United Nations.

We would like to commend the Secretary-General of the United Nations and his collaborators for the immense efforts in preparing a comprehensive report that contains a programme of action for the reform of the United Nations system. We cannot but agree that it is high time for the United Nations to respond properly to the changing world and thus confirm the irreplaceable role of this universal Organization.

We go along with those who insist on a modern, streamlined efficient Organization, ready to respond to the demands of the new times. The United Nations must reach out to the world with new vigour and offer all of its assets in order to prevent threats to international peace and security and also to address the ever-growing number of universal problems. By breaking bureaucratic sediments, the United Nations must became a source of great intellectual power capable of offering a visionary perspective on the future.

We would like to state that one of the pressing tasks is the reform of the Security Council. However, we must be prudent in dealing with this question. A balance between more democratic representation in, and full mobility of action for, this important United Nations body has to be found.

Before concluding, I would like to touch upon the two questions which are of particular relevance for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The first question relates to that abhorrent and immoral weapon — anti-personnel landmines. Bosnia and Herzegovina is unfortunately one of the largest fields infested with this dangerous killing device. We strongly support the conclusions of the Oslo Conference and hope to see the international community united in supporting a comprehensive ban.

The second question has to do with our first-hand experience with the most horrible violation of human rights that took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are therefore strongly raising our voice in favour of the perpetrators of genocide and war crimes being brought before justice and prosecuted. We welcome the idea of the establishment of an International Criminal Court, and we are convinced that the experience with the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda will be taken into account during the preparation process.

In conclusion, I would like to underline our feeling that the exchange of views and experiences during the fifty-second session is of great importance. It will certainly bring new inspiration and, I hope, vision for the overall development of our planet. It will also contribute to our preparations for the encounter with the third millennia, its challenges but also its new chances and possibilities. We must be ready for this historic opportunity.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Iriya Kategaya, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda.

Mr. Kategaya (Uganda): Permit me, on behalf of the Uganda delegation, to express our pleasure at seeing Mr. Udovenko preside over the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. Allow me also to pay a special tribute to his predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, for the outstanding manner in which he discharged his onerous tasks while presiding over the work of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. I also salute and congratulate Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, for the commitment and dedication he has demonstrated since he assumed this office.

We note the initiative announced by the Secretary-General on 16 July 1997, entitled "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform". We will participate actively in the deliberations on these bold and far-reaching proposals. The discussions we shall have on the issues contained in the Secretary-General's proposal will determine the kind of United Nations that can best serve us in the twenty-first century.

The issue of the reform of the United Nations is not new. Reform of this Organization has always been a continuous process in which we all have an interest. We all want to see the United Nations revitalized, strengthened and well managed. The United Nations is unique. The reform of the Organization must be approached from the viewpoint of its purposes.

In reforming the United Nations, due consideration must be given to its unequal and diverse membership, encompassing different cultures and value systems as well as great economic and social inequalities, which lead to differences of opinion on the different aspects of the work of the Organization and how they might be strengthened.

Indeed, most views expressed in the past on reform have come against the background of widespread scepticism. These views see the United Nations as excessively costly, mismanaged, inefficient, bureaucratic, corrupt and overstaffed with low- quality staff. The United Nations, therefore, finds itself at a critical crossroads: neglected in some critical aspects and deliberately eroded in others. Contradictory assessments of its performance and usefulness and divergent views

concerning its future role have given rise to political controversy.

The important issues of reform must therefore not be viewed merely as a question of cutting costs; rather, reform should aim at the enhancement of the efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations in the delivery of programmes and services, particularly those addressing the pressing needs of developing countries. In elaborating and implementing the reform package, it is necessary that the programmes that benefit the least developed countries and Africa emerge stronger and better equipped to discharge their onerous responsibilities.

The Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has already eloquently espoused the African position on the reform of the Security Council. We support this and the Non-Aligned Movement positions. The Security Council should be expanded in both categories on the principle of equitable geographical representation. Africa has already proposed that it be granted two permanent seats with full veto powers. At the same time, the exercise of the power must conform to democratic principles.

If the United Nations is to be reformed and made effective, then adequate financing is a matter of top priority. We therefore appeal to all Member States to pay their dues in full, on time and without conditions. Without this commitment, reforms will only be a smoke screen to hide our reluctance to implement the commitments we collectively agreed upon at the celebration to mark the fiftieth anniversary of this Organization two years ago.

Related to this is the question of the scale of assessments. Uganda supports the principle of capacity to pay as the fundamental criterion for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations. This is critical in order to redress the unfair burden that developing countries in general and the least developed countries in particular continue to shoulder as a result of imperfections inherent in the present scale methodology, which are to their disadvantage. This principle has been consistently reaffirmed by the General Assembly in various resolutions. In this connection, we would like to caution that attempts to impose self-interested positions will not yield any satisfactory outcome.

Uganda welcomes the result of the recently concluded agreement in the area of anti-personnel landmines in Oslo. We are particularly satisfied with the progress thus far made on these weapons. On our part, even before the conclusion of the Oslo agreement on these weapons, which cause untold and indiscriminate destruction, we in Uganda had already stopped and dismantled our facilities for their manufacture. We no longer manufacture, import or use these weapons. We call on all peace-loving nations, those that care for the innocent who lose their limbs every minute to landmines, to follow our example. It is our sincere hope that when the agreement on anti-personnel landmines will be opened in Ottawa, Canada, for signature, even those Member States that were reluctant to join in the consensus on the agreement will sign it. We hope that the Oslo process will lead to progress in disarmament negotiations, leading to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and subsequently of all weapons of mass destruction.

The political and economic situation in African remains a matter of grave concern to us. We believe that Africa must continue to search for and to find the most suitable political arrangements that will guarantee peace and stability. African society, since time immemorial, has always emphasized harmony and decision-making by consensus rather than competition and confrontation. Our societies emphasized the good of the whole rather than the untamed pursuit of selfish interests. In short, egalitarianism and equal participation were the hallmarks of societal and political organization. However, as we all know, Africa was exposed to other cultures and systems that introduced new forms of governance and politics. It is not surprising, therefore, that, upon independence, these powerful and pervasive influences, like multiparty politics and fierce competition, tore our societies apart. The conflicts that proliferated in the wake of independence must be understood against this background.

We can state boldly today that, this notwithstanding, conflict and chaos in Africa is on the retreat. We have witnessed the end of conflict in Liberia and elections have taken place. Military dictators are now roundly condemned and isolated. The actions that are being undertaken by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) against the military junta in Sierra Leone — actions that we all support — speak loud.

In our own region, the Great Lakes region, we witnessed the rout of the Mobutu dictatorship, a heinous regime that plundered one of the richest countries in Africa almost into oblivion. We refused to accept the military coup of Pierre Buyoya in Burundi and have set out tough sanctions and conditions for the restoration of

democratic governance. This position was recently renewed in Dar-es-Salaam.

The efforts that we are undertaking, deserve support, be they in the context of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Resolution and Management or of regional initiatives such as those involving the Great Lakes, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) or those of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development on the Sudan conflict. At the same time, countries that have emerged from conflicts need to be given a modicum of moral and material support to allow them get back on their feet. We are all agreed on the need for post-conflict peace-building and the need to establish a continuum from relief to rehabilitation and development. We are also agreed that democracy, good governance and accountability represent the best form of leadership.

However, nations that are struggling to reconstruct cannot wait for a full restoration of democratic order before they address urgent humanitarian and relief requirements. Quite often the very transition to the rule of law and to democratic governance is contingent upon significant progress on the humanitarian and economic fronts. It is with these kind of considerations that we would like to see tangible assistance extended to the Democratic Republic of the Congo without delay or preconditions. We must put behind us the chaos that afflicted that country and the sad chapter in the history of the Congo that was brought about by Mobutu's mismanagement. The survival of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is paramount and should be of concern to all of us.

The experience of the United Nations in Somalia and Rwanda has demonstrated the need for improvement in the Organization's ability to anticipate crisis situations and put in place effective mechanisms to avert such situations, including in the area of early warning. In this connection, we note with satisfaction the strengthening of the United Nations capacity for post-conflict peace-building with the designation of the Department of Political Affairs as focal point for this purpose.

We are seized of the grave situation in Congo (Brazzaville) and the Central African Republic. The unsteady progress on a negotiated settlement of the conflicts in Angola, Somalia, southern Sudan and the Western Sahara continue be of concern to us. We call on all the parties to the conflicts to engage in constructive dialogue in order to establish lasting peace. We should all support them in this process.

In Uganda, we continue to search for solutions to our economic difficulties. We have therefore continued to implement far-reaching economic reforms that emphasize liberalization, privatization, investment promotion and cost-effectiveness in management. The results are promising, and we have recorded gross domestic product growth rates of more than 6 per cent per annum. Now we are grappling with the need to ensure that economic progress benefits the people, particularly the poorest. This we will address in the framework of a poverty eradication strategy, the pillars of which will include: first, the improvement of physical infrastructure, such as roads and telecommunications; secondly, the universalizing of primary education and the increasing encouragement of private education at the secondary and tertiary levels to unlock the creative power of our population; thirdly, the modernization and diversification of agriculture; and fourthly, the promotion of micro- and small-scale enterprise through improved access to credit for the rural poor.

This is a tall order, and we call upon our development partners to support us in this process in the context of the already formulated national action plans and the agreed framework for international development cooperation.

The issue of the world's freshwater resources remains of the utmost concern to my delegation. Water shortages in the next century are likely to restrain economic and social development. A large part of Uganda is covered by fresh water. In Uganda, we attach importance to the economic value of water, and that is why we recognize the importance of its equitable and reasonable use. Unfortunately, our water resources are being choked by the rapid growth and spread of the water hyacinth on Lake Victoria and on other lakes and rivers in the Nile Valley. As we have done in the past, we urgently appeal once again to the international community to extend its support to enable us to address the problem of the water hyacinth.

Let me reiterate our confidence in the mission of the United Nations in coordinating and delivering targeted assistance to developing countries in all areas of human endeavour, in partnership with Governments. It is important, therefore, to ensure that the focus of the Organization is sharpened to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of its programmes, be it in the area of governance, poverty eradication, capacity-building or humanitarian assistance.

We need a United Nations that will act as an agent of progress and change and that will be equipped to play an effective and leading role in improving the economic and social conditions of all the world's nations — not just a few. We also want a reformed United Nations that will deal effectively with the growing number of complex international challenges, including development, peace and security. Furthermore, we need a reformed United Nations that must provide global leadership and vision in the twenty-first century.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of right of reply. May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Sir John Weston (United Kingdom): I should like to say a few words in response to the remarks made by the Foreign Minister of Spain this morning about Gibraltar.

The long-standing position of the British Government on this matter is well known to the Government of Spain. I will simply restate it briefly here. The British Government believes that issues relating to Gibraltar can be resolved only by direct talks such as those established under the 1984 Brussels Declaration. In that regard, we attach importance to continuing the dialogue with Spain as a means to overcoming our differences.

However, we do not accept Spain's interpretation of the idea of territorial integrity as described by the Foreign Minister this morning. British sovereignty over Gibraltar was clearly established in the Treaty of Utrecht. This legal fact is incontrovertible. Moreover, the British Government stands by the commitment to the people of Gibraltar as contained in the preamble to the 1969 Constitution of Gibraltar, which states that the United Kingdom will not enter into arrangements under which the people of Gibraltar would pass under the sovereignty of another State against their freely and democratically expressed wishes.

Spain's offer to reintegrate Gibraltar into Spain could therefore only be the basis for a settlement if it had the freely and democratically expressed support of the people of Gibraltar.

Mr. Kasoulides (Cyprus): In my reply to the speech of His Excellency the Foreign Minister of Turkey, I should like to state the following.

First, my Turkish colleague spoke about the realities — as he put it — in Cyprus which are not recognized by the international community and suggested that this is perhaps the reason for the failure to achieve peace for so many years. He mentioned as realities the existence of two distant people, two separate administrations and two democracies. One cannot accept as realities *faits accomplis* created by the use of force and maintained by military strength in blatant disregard of international law and United Nations resolutions. Ignoring United Nations resolutions can hardly be considered as a reality by the international community.

Secondly, regarding the application of the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus for membership of the European Union, and regarding whether Cyprus can or cannot join the European Union for legal or political reasons, I wish to refer to the statement made at the seventh plenary meeting by His Excellency the Foreign Minister of Luxembourg in his capacity as President of the Council of the European Union regarding the interpretation of the 1960 treaties and the fact that these treaties cannot prevent Cyprus from joining the European Union.

Still on this point, let me recall the statement made by the President of the Security Council for the month of August 1997, the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, Sir John Weston, who expressed the concern and disappointment of the Council because the Turkish Cypriot side had tried to impede progress in the negotiating efforts by introducing the issue of the European Union application as a precondition for the talks.

Finally, regarding the deployment of S-300 missiles in Cyprus one year from now, I want to state categorically that these weapons are purely defensive surface-to-air missiles destined to defend the small island of Cyprus from a potential air attack, since Cyprus has no air force of its own. It is ludicrous to believe that Cyprus, with a population of half a million, can in any way be a threat to the security of Turkey, a nation of 65 million people, or be a threat to the Turkish Cypriots — who obviously do not fly in the air.

However, if there is substantial political progress in the effort to reach a political solution to the longstanding

Cyprus problem, or if there is an agreement on a programme of demilitarization of the island, as suggested by President Clerides, and if the reasons that made us feel vulnerable facing 35,000 Turkish troops within the island of Cyprus and made us feel the necessity of ordering those missiles thus no longer exist, then there will be no objective in deploying missiles or any other weapons in Cyprus.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.